

Out of Reach

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Summary: Charlotte, The Hero Queen of Albion, and her followers have vanquished the Darkness. Now life within the castle is pulling her back and away from Ben Finn, the man she truly cares for but has never told. They promise to see each other once a year, away from their partners, the castle, and the rest of the world. What changes will happen to them with each passing year?

1. Chapter 1

****A/N:** This story is something that's been floating around in my head for some time now. I hope you like it. In my rush to pour it out, it is probably laden with errors, so feedback is greatly appreciated.**

****This story is dedicated to somebody who will probably never read this, but if they do, I hope they know it's for them.****

****Warning: Lemons from Chapter 1 onwards****

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><p>Chapter 1: Changes<p>

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><p>He stood up and locked the door to their cabin. This was going to be their last mission together for some time. Charlotte and her supporters had not long vanquished the darkness spreading over Albion and while there was still work to do rebuilding the nation, royal duties were starting to pile up. She knew she would be bound to the castle indefinitely after this. He knew this too. His life would pull him in a different direction. She would return to Bowerstone and he was to stay in Aurora to oversee works here, until the security of the region could be guaranteed.<p>

Ben walked over to Charlotte, who hadn't taken her eyes off him since

they entered the room. She sat on the edge of her bed with her legs crossed and he sat next to her before falling back onto the mattress, with his legs dangling off the edge and his hands behind his head. Charlotte moved further onto the bed and rolled onto her stomach to face him, propping her face up on her hands.

"You never usually lock the door, Ben," she broke the silence, staring into his eyes.

He grinned. "I don't usually have a reason to," he said before shifting closer to her. He stared back at her and her heart fluttered.

"Oh? But you do today?" she asked, moving to lay down on her back, closer to him again. Their hands were so close and she resisted the urge to weave her fingers between his.

"You tell me. Why are we both here?" he maintained his gaze on her.

She bit her lip. "Things are going to be different now. No more roaming through the wilderness shooting stuff together."

He chuckled. "I hope we can still do that occasionally. But you're right. It feels very final." Charlotte thought she saw regret in his eyes, but perhaps she was just feeling it in her own. "You didn't bring anyone else here, though. No other advisors, not even Reaver."

Charlotte shrugged. "I don't usually. So why is that so weird?"

He paused and was searching her face for answers. "You can feel it too, right? It's not just me?" He was the only person she felt she could be honest with. So she nodded her head slowly and he smiled. She hadn't seen him smile without a smirk before and it made her own smile spread across her face.

She sighed, trying to remain reasonable. "Something changed somewhere along the line. I don't know when."

"I do." Ben rolled onto his side and ran a strong, calloused hand along Charlotte's jaw before tucking some stray hair behind her ear. "When we first started making fun of Swifty's moustache."

"Ben, that was when we first met, remember?" she looked at him, one eyebrow raised.

"I know. Nothing changed for me. I've only just come to see what I lost while I had other things in sight." He smiled down at her as he pulled her close. He ran his fingers through her hair and she purred. Charlotte closed her eyes and nestled into him. He felt so warm against the chill of the night. It didn't last long, as when she went to wrap her arms around him, Ben stood up, blew out the lantern and moved to stand in front of the large window. He pushed the heavy drapes aside and leaned on the windowsill.

Charlotte followed him. "Ben? What's wrong?"

He shook his head. "I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking. I know about Elliot."

Charlotte looked at the floor, a twinge of guilt flowing through her. "I know about Page, too."

They stood in silence, looking out over the desert. Their lodgings were right on the edge of the Auroran desert. So desolate, but beautiful. The moon was full and the sands were full of shadow and light. She looked at him. The moonlight hit all of his features and it hit her how much she cared for Ben. In a much deeper way than she ever felt for Elliot. She realised how cold she was feeling now they were apart. Ben noticed her shivering and embraced her.

"You should really stop wearing shorts to Aurora, you know how cold it gets." He looked right into her eyes.

She shrugged. "I don't really care."

"You should. Think of the trouble I'll be in if the Queen returns to Albion with pneumonia?" he half-laughed.

She smiled and shook her head. "I meanâ€¦ right now, I don't care about anybody who isn't in this room."

He placed his fingers below her chin and gently lifted her face. His eyes darkened and his voice lowered, "neither do I." Ben gently planted his lips on Charlotte's. "You look really beautiful tonight. Even though you always do," he stammered. Charlotte noticed, usually Ben was over-confident and sarcastic. She liked this side of him, too. She wasn't sure how to put her thoughts into words, so she kissed him back, hoping he wanted this as much as she did.

She deepened the kiss, opening her mouth and he immediately pushed his tongue in to find hers. She lightly bit down on his bottom lip and he moaned into her mouth. He held her tightly before moving one hand through her hair. She bit his lip again, enjoying how excited it was making him. This time he tugged her hair as she did it. She gasped in surprise and he did it again. He turned her around and pushed her against the wall adjacent to the bed. With strong, trained hands, he held her wrists against the wall. Her breathing became more laboured as he started running kisses from behind her ear, down to her clavicle. He nipped at her neck repeatedly as he enjoyed hearing her whimper and lightly shake. He did the same down the other side, biting harder as her tolerance increased. He only stopped once he heard her squeal. She could feel him smiling as he went and she let her body finally feel everything it had for him which she had repressed for so long.

He moved his face up to hers, both looking at each other with lust. He kissed her passionately as he removed his grip on her, moving his hands to unlace her shirt. As it dropped to the floor, Ben moaned and ran his hands down her sides, making her shiver. She unbuttoned his jacket and shirt hastily and tossed them onto the floor. She held him close and ran her hands over his torso and back, growing more excited as she felt years of muscles and scarring beneath her fingertips. As she was exploring his body, he unhooked her bra and ran his hands over her breasts. He pinched them gently, making her squirm and grow impatient. Her fingers found his belt buckle and she unclasped it, throwing it next to his jacket. She fumbled with his zipper and buttons and had loosened them when he pushed her onto the bed. She squirmed towards the pillows but he grabbed her legs and dragged her

to the edge of the bed. He slid off her shoes before unzipping and sliding off her shorts. Once they were also on the floor he stopped to look at her. His breath hitched in his throat. Her hair spilled across her chest and her pale skin looked radiant in the moonlight. Charlotte looked up at him and saw more than lust in his eyes. He'd waited a long time for this, too.

She smiled at him, the sight of him half-naked in front of her was making her burn with anticipation. He kicked off his boots and removed his trousers. His erection sprang free and she could see how much he was wanting this. "No underclothes Ben? I'm not even surprised." She rolled her eyes playfully. He laughed deeply. "What can I say? I don't like being constricted."

Charlotte giggled as he crawled onto the bed, stopping once he was over the top of her. He kissed her sweetly, before staring at her intensely. "You're sure you want this, darling? You know it could change things."

She smiled at him. "Nobody has to know," she said glancing away from him for a moment, thoughts of Elliot and Page fleeting across her thoughts. She brought her attention back to Ben. "It won't change anything when it comes to my feelings for you. I don't think anything could change that."

He smiled before dipping down to kiss her. He rested himself on his forearms as he moved to her chest, biting down on each of her nipples. Every time she squirmed he could feel himself get harder. He moaned as her breathing grew more and more shallow. With his tongue teasing her chest, he brought his hands to her smallclothes. He gently brushed his palm along her centre. He could feel the wetness through the cloth and he groaned. He removed them and she gasped as the cool night air reached her heat. Ben could feel his heart beat harder as he lowered his head to run his tongue over her folds. As he pushed his tongue into her he brought his thumb down to play with her clit until Charlotte wasn't able to stay quiet anymore. Ben was pushing her to come undone. He had total control over her. She started to move herself into his face as her pleasure built up. As she started to squirm more frantically, Ben removed his thumb and mouth. "Ben, please don't stop," she panted.

"There's no way you're coming without me. I want to feel you around me when you do," he smiled as he saw that turned her on more.

Ben stood at the end of the bed and Charlotte dragged herself in front of him. He kissed her, hand wrapped in her hair, pulling it as their kiss deepened. She moved her hands to feel his length. She wrapped one hand around him while the other ran up and down his muscular thighs. She broke the kiss to move her mouth around his cock, pumping the base of his shaft as she sucked on him. His grip on her hair tightened as he grunted. "Fucking hell, Charlotte." He started to move her head up and down, forcing himself further into her mouth. She massaged his balls as he threw his head back in pleasure. Then, she stopped.

"Oh come on, Charlotte!" he said with an exasperated sigh.

She shook her head. "You're not the only one who can tease, you know."

She giggled as he turned her away from him. He wrapped his arm around her and ran his finger over her clit. He then removed it and gently slapped her ass. She arched her back. He slapped it, hard this time. She gasped. He did it again, before running his hand on the emerging red mark. He ran his hand over her pussy again. She was wetter than before, it was starting to leave trails down her thighs. He slapped her one more time before throwing her down onto the bed.

"I've never wanted somebody so badly in my life, Charlotte. Tell me you want me," he returned his fingers to play over her clit. When he was only getting moans in response, he stopped.

"Ben, it's not been want for a long time. I really need you. I need you so badly right now."

He smiled as he pressed himself against her entrance. They were so energised, both knew it wouldn't take much to send them over the edge.

"_Please_, Ben."

With that cue he placed one hand underneath her head, and kissed her deeply as he slid into her. She was so warm and wet, he entirely lost himself in her. She cried out in pleasure, calling his name repeatedly. "Ben, please don't stop" she cried out as he rubbed her clit while sliding in and out of her. He rolled them onto their sides, lifting her leg over his. She pressed himself closer to him and he squeezed her breasts.

"Ben I'm so close, please let me come."

He shook his head furiously. "Not until I say so."

She whimpered as he grabbed her hip and pumped her furiously. He knew he couldn't hold off much longer, but a voice he was trying to keep quiet kept telling him to make the most of this. It may never happen again. He wanted to give her as much pleasure as he could. When he could feel her getting tenser he slid out of her, making her ask for it.

"Please Ben?" she whimpered.

He kneeled in front of her, grabbed her hand and pushed it down onto her clit. "I want to see you do it," he said as he grabbed his shaft in his own hand and started rubbing himself hard. She stared at him as she put two fingers in his mouth. He sucked on them and bit them before she removed them and started drawing them over her clit. As she got more excited she pushed them into herself, arching her back into them.

"Fuck," Ben growled. She smiled at him, before closing her eyes as the pleasure continued to build. He could feel himself reaching his own limit. Before she realised what was happening, he pinned her hands to the bed and he entered her. She wrapped her legs around his back and squealed.

He stared at her. This was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. "Charlotte?" he whispered, right into her ear. "Come for me, right now."

And with that he felt her walls clench as he spilled into her. They writhed together, both of them moaning. Ben kissed Charlotte deeply and he stayed inside of her as they caught their breath and heartbeats. He withdrew and rolled besides her, clutching her tightly. They gazed at each other through hazy eyes. Fatigue from the entire day had started to wash over them.

"Ben?" Charlotte whispered. "Please don't leave me tonight."

He looked back at her with incredulous eyes. "Charlotte, I don't ever want to leave you."

She smiled. "I'm so tired but I don't want to waste our time together."

He smiled. He turned to retrieve his watch from the dresser. "It's already 5am." He held her tightly. "We don't even have time to waste," he half-smiled. His heart felt heavy. He knew that in about an hour their little world would be destroyed.

"Sometimes I wonder if we're together in an alternate universe," she said to him with closed eyes.

"What's our life like there?" he said, closing his eyes to join her fantasy.

"Happy." She smiled. "Some kids. A nice house in Brightwall. I'm teaching at the Academy and you've started up a new soldier's barracks just out of town in Mistpeak for the Royal Army. We do normal things like gardening on the weekends."

"Three kids, I think. Maybe four. I guess we should factor in five as a possibility, things happen after all!"

Charlotte giggled. "It's a beautiful thought isn't it?"

Ben sighed in approval. "Mmm. Listen Charlotte. I don't want this to be it. A one-night stand in the middle of the desert. I know we've slept together before but I really need you to know that this isn't all you are to me."

She ran her hand down his cheek. His stubble tickled her fingers. "I know. And you're so much more to me than I even know how to say." She hadn't opened up to him like this before, and she was surprised when he grabbed her hand and kissed it, and it broke a part of her to see the sadness in his eyes.

"You'll be back next year for an inspection, yeah? I don't know how to say this. But if nothing else, I would love it if we could see each other. Once a year. I don't care where in Albion or Aurora it is. But I need to see you again."

"Ben of course you will," she had wondered if he had forgotten his place in the Royal Army. Then she realised the depth of what he meant. "This doesn't have to be it."

He smiled as sleep finally claimed him. Charlotte held him tightly, knowing she wouldn't be able to sleep with only an hour left of being together. She was missing him already.

2. Chapter 2: Longings

Chapter 2: Longings

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><p>Charlotte tucked her scarf into her jacket. She had remembered to dress properly this time, at least. She had arrived in Aurora with little fanfare, her official business started tomorrow and she had asked Kalin to be discreet about her arrival. She saw a suspicion in Kalin's eyes when she had said that, and felt it when she had asked to lodge in the cabin she had last year. She crossed her legs and tapped her foot in the air. Her stomach started to flutter and she realised he might not even turn up. Words are nice but, she knew well enough, they were often untrue. While she hadn't faced suspicion from Elliot for journeying to Aurora, she still had to explain to him why it was necessary for her to inspect progress. That's what reports were for. Still, he hadn't pushed it. The past year had been a big transition. She had been so happy to leave the castle behind in pursuit of the real world. But that same world had placed her back into the world she no longer wanted.<p>

She began to tap her fingers on the stone step beneath her. She waited outside in the hope that the cool air would keep her head clear. All she could think about was how foolish she was for returning to somebody who she shouldn't be seeing. She was interrupted by heavy footsteps behind her. She turned as Ben sat down next to her, picking her hand up and placing a kiss gently on it.

"You came. I wasn't sure you would," he said, rubbing his neck with his free hand.

She smiled at him, and a faint blush spread across her cheeks. "I thought the same of you." She squeezed his hand. "You look really good, by the way." Her blush deepened and she turned her focus to the rising moon. She meant it. He looked more vibrant than before, more colour to his face. He looked like he had started taking more care of himself.

"As do you. I guess they tend to make sure the Queen stays in good condition?" he raised an eyebrow at her.

"Ugh. Something like that." She grimaced, not wanting to think about the palace here.

He smiled at her, before joining her gaze at the moon. "I've missed you a lot."

Hearing that made her chest tingle right down to her fingertips. "I wasn't sure you'd feel the same."

"Please, Charlotte. I don't lie to you and nor you to me. I mean, we lie to everyone else, I'd rather we didn't here as well."

She giggled lightly, then sighed. He wasn't wrong. "You've got a point there."

"Anyway. It's getting bloody freezing out here. Do you want to go

inside?" Charlotte nodded at him as he rose and grabbed her hand.

He led her into their cabin. It was warm and the air was heavy with incense. The smell had come to remind her of him when she was lonely in the castle. She breathed in deeply as she took a seat at the small table. "I don't remember this being here last year."

Ben shook his head as he poured them both some wine. "It wasn't. I asked Kalin to put it in here. Really the bed was the only thing to sit on andâ€¦ I didn't want you to feel like that's all I wanted for in meeting you here."

Charlotte smiled. "No wonder she looked at me strangely when I asked to stay here specifically."

"Ah. She's a shrewd woman. Not exactly judgmental though, at least," he said as he passed her a goblet.

She took a sip. It was very sweet and strong. "I appreciate the thought. I would actually love to hear about your year, more than what I hear in reports please."

He sat across from her and took a sip of wine. He shrugged. "I'm not sure what to say really. Work's taken up most of my time. There's less stuff to blow up around here now, which is both good and bad."

"Shame. I was hoping to shoot some stuff before too many people realised who I was."

Ben laughed. He reached out for her hand across the table. His face softened. "I don't really want to bring the rest of the world here but, I feel I should ask. Elliot?"

"Alive and well. Working with kids in the orphanageâ€¦"

"And you're still together?" he stared at their hands and he tensed.

"Yes. And Page?" her eyes didn't leave his face.

He nodded. "Yeah. She comes to visit every so often. But she's still in Industrial."

"Does she know?" Charlotte paused in-between words, unsure of how to phrase anything when around Ben.

"No. She's been nagging me to try to get a transfer to Bowerstone though."

"Oh? You're the Commander of the Royal Forces. You can transfer yourself, you know, General Finn," she smirked. "It's been well over a year since you've overseen the total rebuild of security of Aurora. You're really able to leave if you wantâ€¦"

"Maybe," he cut her off. "It felt right for me to be here though." He finished his wine in one gulp and let the sentence hang in the air.

"Ben... all that matters right now is that I've missed you. And there

was no way I could pass up the chance to see you again. Life isn't feeling right and I know it's because I don't see youâ€¦"

Before she could keep talking, Ben pushed his chair out, stood up and picked her off her chair. He held her in his arms as she wrapped her hands around his neck. He kissed her with an urgency she hadn't felt before. When she kissed him back he could feel his pulse race beneath her fingers. He placed her on the bed and extinguished the lanterns. Her eyes widened when she saw he'd lit dozens of small candles around the room which had been masked by the brighter light. He closed the drapes and let the room shine warmly. It was beautiful. Elliot had never done anything like this before. And she suspected Ben had never done anything like this for Page, either.

Charlotte sat cross legged on the bed. Ben sat down the same way, facing her.

"I don't want you to think that you have to sleep with meâ€¦ or that that's the reason we're here. But when I look at you my brain goes funny, and this feels like the only way I can show you how I feel andâ€¦"

Charlotte kneeled and moved towards him, crashing down on his lips. "Ben, we aren't good at talking about feelings. But we feel and that's all that matters."

He groaned as she swept her tongue into his mouth. He pushed her down onto the bed, kissing her so deeply she almost struggled to breathe. He ran his fingers down the length of her neck before running his lips over it. She moaned and slid her hands beneath his shirt. She had missed the feeling of hard muscle beneath her fingers. It made her excitement grow and while she tingled everywhere Ben was making her burn with his mouth. He wore a plain white linen tunic with the sleeves rolled up, making it easy for her to pull it over his head. He broke their kiss to unbutton her jacket and remove it, along with her scarf. She sat up and started to unlace her blouse, but he moved her hands to do it himself, before slowly sliding it down her arms and dropping it over the side of the bed. He pushed her back down and kissed her, hungrily and breathing heavily. He lay on his side and traced the outline of her brassiere with a fingertip, making her shiver.

"You know how to make a woman feel wanted, Finn," she smirked at him. "It's like you can't help yourself when you're with me."

"I'll have you know, I have excellent self-control, thank you very much!" he cocked an eyebrow at her.

"I've literally never seen you display any self-control!" she laughed, causing him to join her.

"Are you serious, darling?" he continued to smile, even though his brow had started to furrow.

"Would you really be here right now, stripping down with me, if you had any?" the smile was starting to fade from her flushed lips.

He stopped smiling as she rolled to face him. He placed his hand on her waist. "I'm not sure you're joking anymore."

Charlotte bit her lip and stared into his chest. "Are you like this with lots of people?" As soon as she asked she felt a knot in her throat.

Ben pulled her into an embrace and she wrapped her arm around him tightly. He placed a soft kiss on her forehead. "Ah. I don't know how to feel about that question."

"I'm sorry. I kind of just said that without thinking about what it meant. Just forget it," she said softly.

"Well I mean, the answer is no. I'm not even like this with my own girlfriend. Not really. What I mean is that it worries me that you don't know how I feel about you. I don't know what I can do to show you." He ran his fingers through the length of her hair.

She loosened her grip on him and lifted her face to kiss him softly on the lips. She looked into his light blue eyes and could see a longing and sadness in them which she hadn't paid notice to before. She ran her thumb across his cheek. "I trust you with everything, Ben. I just don't understand what you feel. I don't understand how it can be possible for you to feel that way about me."

She kissed him softly, again. This time he returned the kiss, continuing to play with her hair. He swept his tongue against hers and she moaned softly.

He broke away from her. "If I wanted a floozy, Charlotte, then I'd go and get one instead of sacrificing the life I have to grab some scarce time with you." He smirked at her and a small smile crept to her lips as her heart beat harder. "But I'm happy to prove it. I'm not going to have sex with you tonight."

She laughed, louder than she intended. "Are you serious, Finn? I don't believe you don't want to. Not at all!" she grew quiet as she gazed down at how constricted he looked in his leather trousers.

"Oh, nobody said anything about what I wanted. Every single fibre of me wants to pin you down and make rough love to you. I want to make you scream my name out in pleasure. I want to take you right now!" he stopped and she realised she was making her lip hurt with how hard she was biting it. He smiled as he watched how flustered she was becoming. "But I am a stubborn man. So I'm not going to." He shrugged as her eyes widened.

"What? Really? You can't say all of those things and then leave." She shook her head slowly and looked at him sternly.

"I can do whatever, Charlotte. I don't think that a Queen can pull rank in this department." He unbuckled his belt and tossed it to the ground. "Take your boots off though, we've probably walked sand all through this room."

She sighed. "Well you're probably right about that, I'll admit," she said as she sat on the edge of the bed and unlaced her shoes before kicking them off.

Ben stood up and started to blow out the dying candles. Charlotte couldn't remove her eyes from him. He was powerful but so careful

with her. She wasn't used to being with someone so physically strong. She was also coming to see how fragile he could be, and she wasn't used to that either.

"Do you remember that last night we spent at Mourningwood Fort? After we killed all those Hollow Men but before Walter and I left for Industrial?" she asked as he blew out the last candle, leaving them in the faint moonlight spilling from the window through the gaps in the drapes.

He sat behind her on the bed and wrapped his arms around her waist and straddled her. He kissed the side of her neck several times, gently nibbling on her flesh. "I do. And the night before we killed all those Hollow Men."

She lightly giggled. "I wasn't sure I'd ever see you again. I wasn't sure if you only got so close to me then because of that. Or because we both thought we could have died."

He bit her hard on the neck and she yelped. "You think some stupid things, Charlotte." He pulled her hair to turn her face towards him. He kissed her forcefully before letting her go and started to pull his fingertips down her shoulders before starting to bite her shoulder blades. Her breaths began to grow shallow. "You're also the one who found Elliot in the sewers just after that," he said before biting her hard at the nape of her neck.

She yelped and he kissed the spot. "It was a confusing time, Finn. I'm trying to apologise and tell you how much you meant to me from the start. Don't be an ass." She rubbed her neck.

Ben slid closer to the pillows and pulled her with him before leaning against the headboard and closing his eyes. "I'm sorry sweetheart," he whispered into her ear. "None of this is fair, but it doesn't stop me being jealous of the man who gets to spend his days with you."

She shook her head. "Just because things are that way doesn't mean I want them to be."

"Tell me why they have to stay that way, then," he said softly as he started to massage her neck.

"Because he hasn't done anything wrong," she let Ben snort in exasperation before continuing. "He's kind. And it's not fair to ruin him because I made a shitty error in judgment when I found him."

"I never asked before, but what were you thinking when you took him back?" Ben asked, moving his hands to her shoulders, rubbing gently.

She brought her feet up to her chest and hugged her legs, focusing on how Ben was unravelling her tension. "Guilt for having left him behind mostly. Andâ€¦" she stopped and closed her eyes while deeply breathing in. She exhaled slowly. "â€¦it doesn't matter."

Ben slid his arms under hers and pulled her close to him. He placed a row of kisses up her neck, stopping just below her ear. "It all matters, Charlotte. And I like hearing you talk."

"Think about it Ben. I found Elliot after we had started negotiating with Page. I saw how you two were and I heard loads of rumours. I was fairly sure you'd been a thing in the past. And that's fine. But there was obviously something still there. I felt really lonely." She could feel her cheeks burn. She didn't normally let words just fall out of her mouth like that.

He placed his chin on the crook of her neck. "This sounds like I'm paying for being my charming self. Charlotte, I'm like that with everyone."

"Yeah. And now I'm living in a situation I can't get out of without hurting more people," she said slowly.

"I know, darling." He held her tightly. "But I'm really glad you came tonight. I've been thinking about this ever since I last saw you."

She let go of her legs and turned around, tucking them behind the base of Ben's back. He placed his hands on her waist and she placed her hands behind his neck, pulling him in to kiss him deeply. He moaned into her as she nibbled on his lower lip. She gasped as he ran his hands along her body, running his fingers over her clothed nipples.

She stopped kissing him and held his face as she looked into his eyes.

"What's wrong, Charlotte?" he asked, forehead creased.

"You're all I think of Finn," she whispered while she ran her hand long his flesh, just above his pants.

He looked at her, a smirk growing across his face as he pushed her back onto the bed. He unbuttoned her trousers and stripped them from her legs, leaving her laying in only her underwear. He moved onto his own pants and removed them slowly as her eyes widened and savoured the sight of him.

"I'm surprised you're wearing underwear, Ben. This has got to be a first," she grinned.

"I know right? I'm getting classier by the day." He crawled over her, dipping down to kiss her forehead. "I wasn't kidding earlier about being stubborn, though." He ran a hand over her smalls, making her legs tense in anticipation. "I'm not sleeping with you tonight."

Charlotte groaned in exasperation. "You are the most frustrating person I know."

"After you, maybe," he laughed and she playfully punched his shoulder.

He lay on his back and she rolled her head onto his chest and their arms wrapped around one another. "I guess it is getting pretty late and you're probably too old to still even be awake."

"Ouch, Charlotte, you really hit my weak spot. Having a woman in bed whose a few years younger than me is such a drag" he said with a

sarcastic drawl and she softly laughed. "We should get some sleep though. We have to wake early tomorrow."

"Not this time. I didn't schedule anything till 10 tomorrow morning so we don't have to rush and sneak about like last year."

"That's nice and all, but it's not why we're getting up early."

"Oh?" she said, noting the lightness in his voice.

"Nope. I might have said I won't take you tonight, but I'll definitely be having you in the morning. We'll just have to get up early to make up for tonight."

She laughed loudly. "I should have known. What if we can't sleep?"

"Then we wait." He kissed the top of her head. "Goodnight Charlotte," he said as he stroked her shoulder with his thumb.

"Goodnight Ben," she said as she listened to his heartbeat, wondering if her own gave away how much she loved him.

End
file.